



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

- ART. VIII. — 1. *Over-Population and its Remedy ; or an Inquiry into the Extent and Causes of the Distress prevailing among the Laboring Classes of the British Islands, and into the Means of remedying it.* By WILLIAM THOMAS THORNTON. London : Longmans. 1846. 8vo. pp. 446.
2. *National Distress, its Causes and Remedies.* By SAMUEL LAING, JR., ESQ., late Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge. London : Longmans. 1844. 8vo. pp. 169.
3. *The Political Economy of a Famine :* an Article in the North British Review for May, 1847.

DURING the present year, the sympathies of the people of this country have been awakened to a painful extent by the sufferings of the people of Ireland and Scotland. There is something peculiarly horrible in the idea of death by starvation ; it is the most appalling form in which the “king of terrors” can appear. All other trials, all possible phases and effects of destitution and misery, must be endured and exhausted, before this awful calamity comes to close the scene. And when we were told that in the land of our fathers there were millions who were suffering from lack of food, and thousands who were actually perishing every week from hunger, every man's heart was thrilled within him, and a noble, a universal effort was spontaneously made throughout the land to send succour to the distressed. It is no subject of national boasting, no cause for pride, that the contribution for this purpose was so large ; amounting to at least half a million of dollars, and capable, therefore, when invested in corn and flour, of rescuing a hundred thousand beings from starvation until another harvest could be gathered in, it was still inferior to our means and our duty, and was not a tithe of what was needed in order fully to stay the progress of the destroyer. In modern times, a general famine in a civilized country is a rare, if not an unprecedented event ; we had almost come to believe that the march of civilization, the extension of trade, the facilities of transport, and the consequent ease of supplying the failure of the crops in one country by the superabundance of the harvest in another, had made a recurrence of such a calamity impossible. And if

we take the word *famine* in its original sense, meaning an absolute deficiency of food and an impossibility of obtaining it on any terms, like that which is suffered by the garrison of a besieged town or by the crew of a wrecked ship, this is true. It is not in the scheme of Providence, as hitherto revealed to man, that harvests should fail all the world over at the same time, or even for the failure to be so general that the aggregate product should not suffice — perhaps with some scrimping and some hardship — for the aggregate want. A semi-barbarous nation in the far East, or the population of a little island separated in every direction by thousands of sea miles from any continent, may suffer from a famine, properly so called, before the arm of Christian Europe or America can be stretched out to the rescue. But no civilized nation, either in the Old or New World, fears lest some blight or drought should suddenly leave a great portion of the people absolutely without food; its fields may be unfruitful for a single season, but in such case it looks with well-founded confidence to its neighbours, and even to remote parts of the earth, for a supply.

How comes it, then, that one half of the whole population of Ireland, and perhaps one sixth of that of Scotland, have been suffering the cruel pangs of hunger for a twelve-month, and that hundreds of thousands of them during this time have actually died of starvation? The bounty of Providence has not failed; ship-loads of corn have been turned away from their shores for want of a market. The granaries of the two islands have been filled to overflowing, not indeed from the products of their own harvests, but from the immense supplies poured into them by our ever-teeming land. Flour and meal became a drug in the English market before a sheaf of this year's wheat was cut, and many dealers in grain were bankrupted by the consequent sudden reduction of prices. If the stock of provisions in the British isles had been equally distributed among the people, not a man, woman, or child would have suffered from hunger for a single hour. The fate of the Irish and Scotch appears the more terrible, because *they have starved in the midst of plenty*. They have died, not because the fields were cursed with barrenness, but because they had not wherewithal to buy food. The price of breadstuffs did not become more than double its average in ordinary years, did not rise so high by

one third as in 1800 and 1801 ; and in those years, though there was scarcity, there was no famine ; the sufferings of the poor were increased, but there was no general starvation. The present year has witnessed a frightful anomaly, which will long be remembered as a disgrace to modern civilization, — *a famine of which poverty was almost the sole cause.*

Yet Great Britain, as a nation, is the most opulent of any on the face of the globe, and inferior to none in moral and intellectual culture, in philanthropy, in the sense of justice, in all the qualities and arts that sustain and dignify human life. Her people were not wanting in generous effort to relieve the terrible suffering of Ireland and Scotland. The contributions made by individuals were large, though not so great as in the United States, for the calamity was viewed, and justly too, as a national one, too great to be stayed by private effort, and therefore requiring the interposition of government ; Parliament accepted the responsibility, and made a noble grant of eight millions sterling to assist the sufferers. The question with all classes was not *how much* should be given, but only *in what manner*, so as most effectually to check the evil. The problem as thus presented was by no means a simple one, for there was great risk lest an injudicious application of bounty should only increase the calamity, or tend to make it permanent. If private dealers had been forced to suspend their business because the government gave away food without stint, the sphere of misery would only have been enlarged, or the evil rendered one of annual recurrence. There was great discussion, therefore, on this point, but no one questioned the propriety of affording instant relief in some form, and to any extent that might be needed. Few persons are hard-hearted enough to count the cost of relief, when their neighbours are actually dying of hunger.

How is it, then, we ask again, that with no difficulty in procuring food, and no lack of wealth or generosity in the nation at large, this terrible famine has happened ? The answer that must be given is a startling one, but it is so well supported by a cloud of evidence from all quarters, that it would be idle to question its accuracy. It is, that the bulk of the laboring population of Ireland, even in their best estate, — in ordinary years, when crops are abundant, and there is no pressure or distress in the commercial or manufacturing world, no stoppage of industry from any unusual

cause, — are but one degree removed from starvation. They have nothing to fall back upon ; no retrenchment is possible, no greater degree of privation can be endured. Of course, a comparatively slight cause, an insignificant diminution of one article of the harvest, a rot in the potato-fields, cuts the slender thread which is their sole support, and millions are in danger of perishing with hunger. The amount of absolute destitution thus produced is great, seemingly out of all proportion with the circumstance to which it is immediately to be attributed. To adopt an illustration which was used some twenty years ago, in discussing a question of political economy,* this unhappy people may be regarded figuratively as clinging to the sides of an immense precipice, with but one support, corresponding to the smallest quantity of potatoes that can maintain life, to save them from falling into the abyss of starvation which yawns beneath. Narrow the ledge on which they stand by the fraction of an inch, and they can no longer retain their foothold. And the number of those who are in this frightful position is so great, that no human power seems able to rescue them from the danger, and to give them a broader hold upon life. Every year, every day, the weakened sinews or crumbling supports of some poor wretches give way, and they fall almost unnoticed into the gulf.

Ireland is not the only sufferer ; many of the people of Scotland are no better off, and the manufacturing and agricultural poor of England are rapidly sinking to the same level. The multitude in this wretched condition increases every day, not only according to the natural growth of population, but in its proportion to the aggregate of all classes. Children are born to be as miserable as their parents, and individuals are constantly falling from one degree of poverty to another, till they reach this lowest stage. Property tends faster and faster to accumulate in a few hands ; the gains that are made, and they are enormous, are for these few ; the losses, the destitution and misery, are for the million. Disposable capital and labor both increase in Great Britain much faster than is needed ; the former is sent in vast amounts to foreign countries in search of employment ; the latter is less easily exported, and an immense surplus of it remains at home. It was long ago remarked, that man is the least transportable

* *North American Review* for July, 1827, p. 117.

kind of luggage. Labor is the only article the supply of which seems to increase without any reference to the demand. Its price therefore tends constantly to fall, competition acting on it with the accelerating force of gravity on a falling body ; it is miserably paid at the best, and much of it can find no employment whatever. It often will not command any price, and he who has nothing else to offer must consequently beg or starve.

We do not by any means attribute the miseries of Ireland to the superabundance of her population. There are nearly fourteen millions of acres of cultivated land in the island, besides six millions more, which are now uncultivated, but of which more than one half might be reclaimed ; making an aggregate that, under the most skilful husbandry, would support a population at least three times as great as the present one. The population now exceeds eight millions, having doubled since 1791, and quadrupled since 1750 ; the misery of the people is great enough, but it surely has not increased in any thing like this proportion. Probably they were almost as badly off half a century ago as they are at the present day ; the evil is greater now simply because there are more to suffer, and the difficulty of finding adequate remedies for their misery is proportionally increased. Besides, Ireland now raises more food than is necessary for her sustenance, and exports annually vast quantities of provisions to England ; and, as if for the express purpose of confuting the Malthusians, these exports rapidly increase from year to year. The export of cereal grains, chiefly oats, and of other edible products of the soil, steadily increased from less than one million of quarters in 1817 to three millions and a half in 1838. The exportation of beef, pork, butter, and other animal products, has also gone on increasing, though in a lower ratio. The distress, then, is not caused by the growth of the population, and emigration alone must be a very inefficient remedy. With the present tendency to increase, at least one hundred and thirty thousand souls must remove annually, in order only to keep the population stationary, and to confine suffering within its present limits. Suppose vastly more should be done, and four millions of persons should emigrate at once ; the population of the island would then only be carried back to the point where it was in 1791, and if nothing else were accomplished, the remainder of the people would

be as destitute now as they were then. It is idle, therefore, to talk of emigration alone as a cure for all the ills that Ireland is heir to, or of over-population as the only source of her miseries.

Still, — and this is our only reason for alluding to the subject of population here, — with the increase of numbers the sphere of misery is certainly enlarged, and relief becomes more hopeless. If the population should double in the next half-century as it has done in the fifty years that are past, there will then be sixteen millions of people to care for, and from one half to three fourths of these in a state of such destitution, that a slight circumstance, a partial failure of the crops, will place them in imminent peril of starvation. The famine of this year may be repeated after a short interval, — is almost sure to recur, if any accident should enhance the price of the staple article of provision, whatever it may be, which is the sole reliance of the bulk of the people ; for, we repeat it, it is not the absolute scarcity of food, but the entire want of means to purchase it, which is the evil to be dreaded. Here is the cloud which darkens all the future for Great Britain, not only fearfully large and black at the present moment, but constantly swelling and covering a still larger portion of the heavens with gloom. Already it has once broken in a tempest that has desolated Ireland and a large part of Scotland in its fury. And there is no clearing up after the storm ; the sky still lowers, the skirts of the cloud are advancing, and the thunder mutters at no great distance in the ears of England. To speak without metaphor, this “ condition-of-England question,” as it is called, is the one subject which, for the people to whom it relates, transcends all others in importance, and demands instant and anxious attention, with a fearful penalty for neglect. While it remains unsettled, all signs of national prosperity are factitious and deceitful ; they no more evince the absence of danger than does the hectic glow on the cheek of a consumptive patient. They only herald approaching dissolution.

Before attempting to review the causes and consequences of this national distress, it may be necessary to produce some evidence as to its nature and extent. Those who have not attended to the subject may deem the existence of such a state of things incredible, and demand to be satisfied about the facts before they enter the boundless field of spec-

ulation respecting their character and tendency. The proofs lie before us in such abundance, in the reports of commissions of inquiry made to Parliament, in travellers' accounts, in the works of statisticians and political economists, that the only difficulty consists in making a selection or summary which shall afford matter enough for conviction, and be brief enough for our narrow limits. Two of the writers now under review have labored upon this task of compression, but each of them had a book to fill, while we have but an article. We must be satisfied, then, with giving specimens rather than a summary of the evidence, and with referring our readers to Laing and Thornton for more complete, though succinct, statements. Let us look first to Ireland as affording a full picture of that extreme state of destitution and misery, that farthest limit on this side of actual starvation, to which, as we shall afterwards show, the laboring poor of Scotland and England are fast approaching. It is not necessary to harrow up the feelings of our readers with the details of the famine of the present year ; it will be enough to exhibit the state of things which caused that famine.

According to the Irish census of 1841, which was taken with extraordinary pains and minuteness, and is entirely trustworthy, the whole number of families in Ireland is 1,472,787, of whom nearly *two thirds* are chiefly employed in agriculture. There are 1,126,050 males over fifteen years of age, who are classed as agricultural servants and laborers, forming nearly one half the whole number of males of this age on the island. Besides these, 306,915 families cultivate farms not exceeding five acres each, many of them indeed comprising but one acre, and these small farmers, as we shall see, are nearly as wretched as the ordinary day-laborers. Those who hire less than one acre are reckoned as day-laborers. It is obvious that the agricultural population is excessive, only 352,016 families being chiefly engaged in manufactures and trade. England has nearly twice as much arable land as Ireland ; in the former country, only about 760,000 families are engaged in the tillage of 25,632,000 acres, while in the latter 974,188 families cultivate 13,838,782 acres. Adding the wives and children of the day-laborers and of those who hire farms not exceeding five acres, we have not less than five millions of persons,

or nearly five eighths of the whole population, constituting the class of the agricultural poor. To these must be added at least another million of poor among the civic population, and those in the country engaged chiefly in manufacture and trade. These six millions would all be considered, according to the standard of wages and living in the United States, as very poor ; but as it is estimated by the best authorities, that *only* one half of the Irish population subsist chiefly or entirely upon potatoes, the number of those who cannot fall to a lower stage of destitution than that which they occupy at present may be safely stated at four millions.

The excess of the rural population, in comparison with the civic, is one great cause of the wretchedness of the small farmers. Unable to obtain work, the laborers strive to hire land, and their competition, by extravagantly raising the rent, brings the petty farmers nearly to their own level. *Rack-rent* is a new word which Ireland has added to the English language, to denote the excessive rent which the land-owner wrests by torture, as it were, from the poor cultivator. Any price that is asked will be given, and to secure the payment of it, the crops are not permitted to leave the ground till the demands of the landlord are satisfied. "The rent of *conacre* land," says Mr. Thornton, "ranges from £4 to £10 [or from 20 to 50 dollars] an acre." This term is given to the small plots of ground which are hired by agricultural laborers to be planted with potatoes. They are commonly held under one of the larger farmers, the rent being paid sometimes in manure, and sometimes in labor. For the cabin attached a rent of seven or eight dollars a year is paid. The system of underletting is carried to a great extent in Ireland, three or four "middlemen" often intervening at successive stages between the land-owner and the actual cultivator of the soil. The failure of either one of these may cause the single pig, the last resource, of the poor tenant to be seized for rent which he had already paid to his immediate landlord. Occupants of larger farms are obliged to employ laborers at the lowest wages, and sometimes to defer the work of harvest for a long time from want of money to pay them. The excessive rent which the farmer pays deprives him of the power of properly manuring his land, or observing a due rotation of crops, so that the soil is every year deteriorated,

and the fences and buildings fall into decay. Numbers of them every year fail to meet their engagements, and are consequently deprived of their holdings, and sink into the next lower class, the number in which constantly increases as they go down in the scale, till they reach that in which further degradation is impossible.

About two dollars a week are considered in England as the *minimum* of wages that can support a laborer with his family, and even at this point the hardship which he must endure is excessive. But the Irish laborers seldom earn more than one dollar a week, and for a large portion of the year cannot find employment even at that price. They flock in multitudes to the towns, or to England at harvest time, seeking a pittance that may prevent them from being turned away from the cabin and potato-patch, which alone can shield them from starvation. While they are gone, their wives and children wander about the country as beggars, often relieved by those who have nothing but potatoes for themselves. The people in the north of Ireland, it is often remarked, are less miserable than those in the middle districts and the south; but work cannot be obtained even by them for many months of the year. In winter they are hardly ever employed; but their little crop of potatoes is then just gathered in, and they are able to subsist till spring. In the summer they are again out of work, and, their potatoes being now exhausted, they are compelled to beg or starve, unless they can go to England or the neighbouring counties during the harvest. Many of them pick up shell-fish or weeds for food when their potatoes fail, and thus live on, always hoping "that times may mend, and that their landlords, sooner or later, will do something for them."

Throughout Leinster, the greater part of the laborers are wholly out of work during the six months of summer and winter; spring and autumn alone afford employment at miserable wages. At one place in Carlow, the Commissioners of Inquiry in 1834 were told that five hundred men were unemployed, many of whom could not obtain two days' work in a month; at another place, out of fifty who applied for employment, only ten succeeded in getting it. In Longford, a fourth part of the laborers had nothing to do from September to March, and again from the first of June to the middle of August. As wages at the busiest time were

not more than twenty cents a day, a laborer could lay by nothing for the months of compulsory idleness. How, then, can he live? He has usually a bit of land, often not more than a rood, for which he pays an excessive rent, and from which he may obtain nine barrels of potatoes. On these he subsists during the winter. In summer they beg or borrow, — “Faith,” said one man, “there’s but little chance of our paying it back”; — or they gather “pressagh,” a weed resembling Scotch kale, and upon this and boiled nettles they frequently live for days together. When such food disgusts, or cannot be found, they try to “kill the hunger with water,” or “stifle” it by lying abed all day. In many instances, the Commissioners were told of persons who had repeatedly gone without food for twenty-four or forty-eight hours. Some eat up their seed-potatoes, or grub up the young potatoes when they are no bigger than marbles, and as unfit to eat from their quality as their size.

In Munster, things are still worse; the population is more dense, and competition is more eager both for employment and land. In two parishes, containing four hundred and ninety laborers dependent on occasional employment, it was found that the average quantity of work obtained by each sufficed only for three or four months in the year. Their clothes become rags before their term of service is expired, and the wearer is not only ashamed to attend chapel, but in severe weather he is sometimes obliged to leave work, because no longer able to bear the cold when half naked. Half of the cabins contain no bedstead, but their inmates lie on straw spread on the ground, without blankets or any other covering.

It is in Connaught, however, that we find the most striking picture of Irish destitution and misery in the most hopeless and aggravated form. It is “the lower deep” of suffering, which cannot be paralleled in any other district of this afflicted island. In the county of Mayo, out of about 46,000 farms, 44,000 are under fifteen acres, and are held by men who are obliged to do their own work, being too poor to hire laborers. Yet the county swarms with laborers who can seldom get employment one day out of four; there are 67,000 of them in this wretched condition. Most of them hire a potato-patch of the small farmers, or occupy some of the waste ground which they are allowed to hold

rent-free for a year or two, till they have made it worth paying rent for. When they have planted their potatoes, they set off to roam the country, beginning to beg only when at a distance from home ; or if they can obtain a few shillings to pay their passage, they cross over to England in search of work. If in this way they can get money enough to pay for the seed which they obtained on credit, and for the rent of the land, they can live during the winter on the potatoes which they have raised ; otherwise, their crop is seized, and they must beg during the winter also. They plant only the "lumper" potatoes, which are raised easily and in larger quantities than the other sorts, but are soft, watery, and unwholesome, so that even pigs do not thrive on them. These are often dug while yet small, and eaten with noxious weeds and other disgusting food. In summer, which is always the period of greatest suffering, men may be seen lying in the ditches from weakness, or working on the bog when so enfeebled by hunger that they can hardly raise the sods. A German traveller, J. G. Kohl, gives the following account of the habitations of these poor wretches.

"In the west of Ireland, there are districts where a man may imagine himself in a wilderness abandoned by mankind, where nothing is to be seen but rocks, bogs, and brushwood, and where wild beasts alone may be supposed capable of housing. All at once, however, on closer inspection, little green patches like potato-fields are seen scattered here and there among the rocks, and a stranger is tempted to go nearer and examine them. Let him look where he is going, however, or he may make a false step ; the earth may give way under his feet, and he may fall into — what ? into an abyss, a cavern, a bog ? No, into a hut, — into a human dwelling-place, whose existence he had overlooked, because the roof on one side was level with the ground, and nearly of the same consistency. If the traveller draw back his foot in time, and look around, he will find the place filled with a multitude of similar huts, all swarming with life."

In a parish of more than ten thousand inhabitants, there were found but four hundred beds, so that, allowing three persons on an average to each of them, about nine thousand persons must have lain on straw at the best. In a village of this parish containing forty-five families, there were but thirty-nine blankets ; and in another parish of 1,648 families, 1,011 families had but one blanket each, and 299

had none at all. "The straw we lie on," said one of the Mayo cottiers, "was given us by some neighbours in charity ; we do not change it, we do not part with it at all ; but as it wastes away, the neighbours give us a wisp to add to it." In respect to dress, the poorest peasants often remain for years without buying an article. In one parish there were more than three thousand persons who had bought little or nothing of this sort for five years. The men strive desperately to obtain "a breeches," and by the help of rags do contrive to screen, not to cover, their nakedness ; their wives are forced to wrap an old sheet or blanket round them, and the children are often naked. Small farmers are sometimes so destitute, that they cannot go to market without borrowing a coat from one person, a waistcoat from another, and a pair of trousers from a third. As wages usually do not exceed twelve cents a day, even for the small portion of the year in which they can obtain work, it is obvious that the laborers cannot afford to spend much upon clothes.

The dwellers in the towns are no better off than their brethren in the country. Wages may be a trifle higher, but there is always a multitude of applicants, and little work to be distributed among them. There is small encouragement for the lower branches of manufacture and the mechanic arts, the bulk of the people being too poor to create any demand for the articles made ; hence the excess of the agricultural over the civic population goes on constantly increasing. Bantry, says Mr. Thackeray, "is a town of cabins ; the wretchedness of some of them is quite curious. An ordinary pig-sty in England is really more comfortable. Most of them were not six feet long or five feet high, built of stones huddled together, a hole being left for the people to creep in at, — a ruined thatch to keep out some little portion of the rain. A Hottentot kraal has more comforts in it." In Limerick, families of eight or nine persons inhabit single rooms, not more than four yards square, into which the rain pours through the roof, and the wind rushes through the broken windows. In Cork, says Mr. Thackeray, "there are quarters swarming with life, but of such a frightful kind as no pen need care to describe ; alleys where the odors, and rags, and darkness are so hideous, that one runs frightened away from them. In some of them, they say, not the policeman, only the

priest, can penetrate." One striking fact, ascertained at the last census, shows how universal is the poverty of the people; above a million of families, or over two thirds of the whole nation, live either in mud huts or single rooms of larger houses.

The foregoing account, which is a mere abridgment of Mr. Thornton's, is founded chiefly on the reports of the Irish Railway and Irish Poor-Law Commissioners. We have now before us, in five immense folios, the evidence taken in every part of the island, with great care and labor, by the Commission of 1844 on the Occupation of Land in Ireland. It is enough to say of it, that it confirms in every particular the preceding statements, and adds even higher coloring to this awful picture of national wretchedness. We can give but one extract; it is from the testimony given before the Commission by Daniel Griffin, a physician and surgeon of the city of Limerick, who had made it his business for years to inquire into the condition of the lower classes. During a few days preceding his examination, he collected his evidence by making minute inquiries of a few families, "taken quite indiscriminately." The following, with some abridgment, is his account of the result:—

"The families were 44 in number, consisting of 245 persons. In these there were 62 persons capable of work, with 183 persons depending on them; of these last, 45 were sick or infirm. I could ascertain with certainty the earnings of only 35 of these families, and in these there were 56 persons capable of working, each of whom on an average earned £5 or £6 within the past year, being from £7 to £8 for each family, which would be equivalent to about seven months' employment to each working person, at 7½d. [15 cents] a day. With regard to their food, I found that 11 of these families seemed to live rather comfortably in comparison with the rest, having milk usually with their potatoes, and meat occasionally; the remaining 33 families lived upon the lowest description of food, such as white potatoes and salt or herrings, and sometimes, but rarely, a little sour milk. Of this last number, 18 families were frequently unable to procure any food, sometimes fasting for a long period, and living for a length of time on one meal a day. One person, James Boyle, with a wife and two children, states that they lived on potatoes and salt; the family usually go without breakfast. The next, Michael M'Namara, wife and four children, says their food

consists of potatoes and salt, sometimes a herring, frequently nothing; the family often go without a meal. Another, Daniel M'Mahon, wife and two children, — potatoes and salt, dip (a kind of grease), or a herring, rarely milk; the wife, though very sickly, did not drink a hap'worth of milk these six weeks. Then there are several others with much the same answers as these. Thomas Malony, with a wife and four children, states that his food is potatoes when he can get them, generally with salt or a herring, and sometimes a little milk; what his family eat for a whole day would scarcely make one meal; and once, lately, the whole of them, six in number, were for thirty-six hours without any food but one threepenny loaf. Others, the family of a widow, describe the same sort of food, — dry potatoes, seldom more than once a day; this last fortnight their family have had but one meal a day. Garret Lee states, 'many a day these three months he worked on a meal a day, and was glad to have it; that dry potatoes are their food, and they very seldom have enough.' John Donovan says, 'he and his family are starving; they did not eat two full meals this week; has eaten nothing himself this day, 5 P. M., but a few apples; ate nothing yesterday but their supper last night, which was obtained by pledging some of their things.' A widow states, she had no supper for her family the night her husband died; they all went to bed supperless. John Cherry says, 'the people are so poor they are ready to eat one another'; John Fitzgerald, that 'there are beggars coming to their door who are better off than they are.'

"With regard to their clothing, 10 of these families were well clad, 14 indifferently, and 20 very badly off for covering. With regard to lodging, 27 occupied a house each, and 17 a room each; the average number of rooms in each house was three, and the average rent of each house £3 8s. 9d., that of each tenanted room £1 1s. 9d., a year. These rooms and houses were occupied at the same time by 45 other families, besides the 44 which came under my examination, 99 families being located in 42 houses, consisting of 131 rooms. I made it my business at different times to visit the residences of these people, and found them in the most wretched condition, the staircases ruinous, the rooms ruinous, the people sleeping on straw without bedding and without bedsteads. Garret Lee says, 'his family did not go to bed these three nights, their last blanket being taken by the person from whom they rented the cellar for non-payment of rent.' Of the 44 families, 6 had nothing in the pawn-office, one had nothing to put there, having lost every thing, while the remaining 37 had every article they could spare pledged to pur-

chase food ; or, as they said forcibly, ‘every thing they could spare and that they could n’t,’ having themselves in many instances nothing but straw to lie on, and without any covering for their children at night.” — Part II. pp. 744, 745.

We gladly turn to the sister kingdom of Scotland, as the distress there, though quite as great, is certainly not so universal. It exists chiefly in the large cities, the populous manufacturing districts, the northern Highlands, and the Islands. Alison, the historian, estimates that there are at least 250,000 persons in Scotland, nearly a tenth part of the population, who are in a state of almost total destitution, and are permanently retained in that state. Many of the great Highland proprietors, for reasons which we shall consider hereafter, have driven the tenantry off their estates, which they have converted into immense sheep-walks, preferring to raise brutes instead of men. The unhappy cottiers thus dispossessed have found refuge on some barren moors, but chiefly on the sea-coast, where they lived comfortably for a time by the manufacture of kelp ; but the demand for this article having greatly fallen off more than twenty years ago, they were reduced to their present state of misery, often having only shell-fish and weeds to eat, with a little water-gruel at night. The peasantry still remaining in the Highlands are mostly *crofters*, or tenants of small pieces of ground, the tillage of which forms their sole support. The soil is so poor and rents are so exorbitant, that they live very miserably, and those who have but an acre or two of land are in constant danger of starvation. Once famous for their stalwart frames, their agility, and powers of endurance, they have now become meagre and stunted in appearance, and the faces of their famished children are as thin and pale as if they had been bred in the foul wynds and closes of Glasgow and Edinburgh. On the Hebrides islands, owing to the poverty of the soil, and the multiplication of the inhabitants, wretchedness is extreme, and the remoteness of their position places them almost beyond the reach of charity. The policy of consolidating farms and driving off the small tenantry has been pursued there to a great extent. A population of 500 souls was compelled to migrate from the isle of Rum, which is now occupied to advantage by a single tenant, whose family and servants do not number over 50. The multitude thus

dispossessed of their ancient homes crowd into the great cities in search of employment and sustenance, swelling the mass of poverty there, and reducing wages and the standard of living for the lower classes to their own level. The influx of Irish laborers, also, particularly into the western counties, has had a great effect in lowering the condition of the Scottish peasantry.

It is a law of our nature, that moral degradation must go hand in hand with physical suffering. Nowhere is this more strikingly exemplified than in those quarters of Glasgow which form the sole refuge of the miserably poor, and where alone the Highlander expelled from his croft, and the distressed islanders, can find shelter. "I have four times visited these districts," says Mr. Symonds, in the Handloom Commissioners' Report, "once in the morning and three times at night; I have seen human degradation in some of its worst phases, both in England and abroad, but I can advisedly say that I did not believe, until I visited the wynds of Glasgow, that so large an amount of filth, crime, misery, and disease existed on one spot in any civilized country." Here is collected a motley population engaged in all the lower branches of industry, and an immense number who find their only means of subsistence in plunder and prostitution. Here, "in the lower lodging-houses, ten, twelve, and sometimes twenty persons, of both sexes and all ages, sleep promiscuously on the floor in different degrees of nakedness." Captain Miller, the Glasgow superintendent of police, in speaking of this district, says:—

"There is concentrated every thing that is wretched, dissolute, loathsome, and pestilential. These places are filled by a population of many thousands of miserable creatures. The houses in which they live are unfit even for sties, and every apartment is filled with a promiscuous crowd of men, women, and children, all in the most revolting state of filth and squalor. In many houses there is scarcely any ventilation; dunghills lie in the vicinity of the dwellings; and, from the extremely defective sewerage, filth of every kind constantly accumulates. In these horrid dens the most abandoned characters of the city are collected, and from thence they nightly issue to disseminate disease, and to pour upon the town every species of crime and abomination."

The population of this quarter is estimated by Mr. Sy-

monds to be 30,000, though Alison makes it only two thirds as great. The latter writer says that Edinburgh contains about 15,000 in a state of equal wretchedness, and that the other cities of Scotland have their full proportion of the same, according to their population. The progress of crime, it is also shown, has been "more rapid in that part of the British dominions, during the last thirty years, than in any other state in Europe." Serious crimes, in particular, during the thirty years prior to 1840, increased in Scotland more than thirty-fold. In Glasgow alone, during the sixteen years before 1840, while the population advanced 70 *per cent.*, the progress of felonies and other serious crimes was 500 *per cent.* The sanitary condition of the place also leads to the same conclusions respecting the destitution and misery of a large portion of its inhabitants. The average rate of mortality in Great Britain is about 1 in 48, and in London 1 in 40; while in Glasgow, from 1835 to 1840, it was about 1 in 32, and in one year (1837) it was as high as 1 in 24½. Ireland retains its mournful preëminence in this respect also; for among the poor in Limerick, according to Dr. Griffin, whose evidence we cited on a preceding page, the rate of mortality rises to 5 *per cent.*, or 1 in 20. A general review of the condition of the poor in Scotland will surely lead one to the conclusion adopted by Mr. Laing, that "Scotch destitution has gone a step beyond English, and arrived, like that of Ireland, at a point at which all other evils are swallowed up in the urgent and ever-present danger of literal death from starvation."

If the condition of the laboring classes in England is not so frightful as that of their brethren in Scotland and Ireland, it is certainly bad enough to command the serious attention of the statesman and the philanthropist, and to justify the most gloomy forebodings. So much statistical and general evidence has recently been published on this subject, that we may safely decline entering into particulars, and mention a few general facts only for the purpose of comparison. According to the census of 1841, the population of England, including Wales, was nearly sixteen millions; the whole number of paupers who were relieved in the year ending in March, 1844, was about 1,250,000, being more than one thirteenth of the entire nation. And this vast amount

of pauperism exists in spite of the stringent provisions of the Poor-Law Amendment, the avowed purpose of which was by great severity to deter the indigent from applying for relief. Almshouses have been converted into prisons, married couples are separated from each other, and a rigid course of hard labor and low diet has been adopted, in the hope that the poor might find their situation even more intolerable when they were supported by the public than when they relied only on themselves, — that they might prefer starvation outside of the workhouse to the severities practised within it. This rigorous system has lately been introduced, in the well-grounded fear lest the community should come to be burdened with the support of most of the laboring population who are engaged in agriculture, and who number with their families at least three and a half millions. The wages of an able-bodied adult of this class never exceed 13s. a week, and in many counties are as low as 7s. ; the average throughout the kingdom cannot exceed 9s. The peasants are almost always day-laborers, hired by the week or job, possessing no property, and living in rented cottages. How they live and support a family on these wages is matter of astonishment even to their employers. Their food consists chiefly of bread and potatoes, most of them tasting meat not more than half a dozen times in the course of their lives. They pay from £2 10s. to £4 a year for the rent of a miserable cottage, often having but two rooms, with mud walls and a floor of stone or earth. All witnesses agree that early marriages are very common among them, and in most cottages children are more numerous than the adult inmates.

“In the workhouse,” says Mr. Tuffnell, an Assistant Poor-Law Commissioner, “where strict economy is studied, and where we are constantly told that we give the inmates too little to eat, it is well known that a man, his wife, and five children cannot usually be kept under £1 per week, and this is reckoning nothing for house-rent, and all the articles required, being purchased in large contracts, are obtained 20 *per cent.* under the shop prices. Taking into account these two latter considerations, it appears that such a family could not be maintained in a state of independence out of the workhouse, with the same *comforts* they have in it, at a less cost than 25s. a week, which is more than double the general agricultural wages in England.”

No wonder, then, that a great number of families every year are fairly starved out of the country into some large town, and go to swell the floating population who tenant there the cellars and lodging-houses, like those described in Glasgow, and live by the worst-paid sort of manufactures, or by thieving, prostitution, and casual employment. How far this absorption of the poor into the cities and manufacturing districts has gone appears from the fact, that in twenty-one counties, where the poor are chiefly engaged in agriculture, the rate of increase of the population, from 1831 to 1841, was only 8 *per cent.*; while in the remaining counties, which contain most of the manufacturing, mining, and trading population, the rate of increase for the same period was 17 *per cent.* Dividing Scotland in the same way, the corresponding ratio was 4 against 15 *per cent.*, showing that the increase in the agricultural counties was little more than one fourth as great as in the others. Considering that the average duration of life among agriculturists is much higher, and the mortality among infants much less, and that in large cities, such as Liverpool and Bristol, and in large districts in the heart of London, such as Whitechapel, St. Martin's in the Fields, and East and West London, the number of deaths even exceeds the births, so that they would be depopulated, if it were not for their rural recruits, who come in so fast that the population actually increases with frightful rapidity, it is evident that the agricultural poor cannot find sustenance at home and are driven by stern necessity into the cities.

How they are situated when they arrive there appears from the description already given of the wynds of Glasgow, a description which will apply with little abatement to the most populous quarters of all the large cities in England. In Liverpool alone there are 8,000 inhabited cellars, one third of them either wet or damp, which contain a population of more than 35,000 souls. In Manchester, in 1838, there were 267 lodging-houses, of which Dr. Howard says, "the crowded state of the beds, filled promiscuously with men, women, and children, the floor covered over with the filthy and ragged clothing they have just put off, and with their various bundles and packages, mark the depraved and blunted state of their feelings, and the moral and social disorder that exists." In Birmingham, there were 374 such

lodging-houses. Two asylums were opened in London in order to afford a night's lodging to houseless wanderers, and 9,840 persons were admitted into them in the first three months of 1843. Near the docks at the east end, "hundreds of poor men may be seen before daybreak in the winter, waiting for the opening of the gates in the hope of obtaining a day's work ; and when the youngest and strongest, and those best known, have been taken, hundreds still may be seen returning, sick at heart, to their destitute families."

Of the manufacturing operatives, the handloom weavers are the worst paid, the wages of a whole family among them often not exceeding 5*s.* a week, and even in prosperous times do not amount to 8*s.* After what has been said respecting the necessary expenses of a family existing in the humblest manner, it is difficult to see how they subsist at all ; their state is certainly one of extreme destitution ; yet there are 800,000 persons entirely dependent on this employment. The bulk of the manufacturing population, it is true, are not so deeply sunk in misery as these ; but their situation is still a very precarious one, and when, as is frequently the case, the fluctuations of trade cause great numbers of them to be thrown out of work, they are in imminent peril of starvation. Thus, while the manufacturing interest was in a very depressed state in 1842, formidable riots took place in the midland counties, which showed that the people had become desperate. In Manchester, there were 9,000 families earning on an average only one shilling a week ; in Bolton, out of 50 mills, usually employing 8,124 workmen, 30 mills with 5,061 operatives were standing idle, or working only short time ; and in Leeds, 4,025 families, being one fifth of the whole population, were dependent on the poor-rates. But the calamity reached its height in Stockport, where no less than 10,000 persons were thrown out of employment. Many of these returned to their native parishes, where alone they could claim relief as paupers, and others wandered far over Lancashire and Yorkshire in search of work. "Those who remained behind struggled gallantly before they applied for parochial relief ; they first exhausted the little hoard accumulated in better days, and sold or pawned their furniture, eking out the money thus obtained with the earnings of occasional jobs."

“Notwithstanding this independence of spirit, and notwithstanding that a large portion of the population of Stockport consisted of strangers not entitled to parochial relief, the number of persons of every description who were able to claim and were compelled to accept that relief had increased, in December, 1841, to nearly seven thousand, one twelfth at least of the whole population of the Union. To so large a multitude, only scanty relief could be afforded; not more than one shilling per head weekly. The poor rates, of course, were increased in proportion; but the poverty of the rate-payers created so large a number of defaulters, that the amount collected invariably fell far short, not exceeding two thirds at most, of the sum estimated. In fact, out of 7464 rated houses existing in the township of Stockport at the date of the Report, 1632 were empty, and for nearly 3000 more default had occurred.

“The commissioners personally visited the dwellings of several poor persons. Many of them are expressly stated to have parted with clothing and bedding for food, before applying to the parish. One man had pawned his wife’s wedding-ring for eighteen-pence, and his Bible for a shilling. Some were still living by the sale of their effects, and had not yet applied for relief. John Daniels (his name deserves to be recorded), a silk-weaver, with a wife and five children, having been long without work, was obliged to apply to the parish, and obtained an order for a month for four shillings a week in provisions. The whole of his incomings were then about eight shillings a week. Being asked in what manner he disposed of this pittance, he said, ‘We make our breakfast for seven of us of a teacupful of oatmeal made into thin porridge, together with some bread; at dinner we have about six pounds of potatoes, with salt and bread; the tea, or supper, as you may call it, the same as at breakfast; in the whole about four pounds of bread daily, say eight-pence, two-pennyworth of potatoes, and two-pennyworth of oatmeal, amounting to a shilling a day for seven of us. This, and 10*d.* a week we have to pay for coals, make up the 8*s.* nearly.’ This man, on obtaining work, gave up of his own accord part of the allowance ordered for him by the guardians. He had received 4*s.* a week for three weeks, and when the fourth payment became due, he went to the relieving officer, and said, ‘I will have no more relief. I have got one warp for myself, and the prospect of another for my wife.’

“The cases personally inspected by the commissioners, being chiefly those in which relief was received from the parish, did not present the extreme of wretchedness. There were other families, in which, according to the chairman of the Board of Guar-

dians, it had been ascertained that many women had ‘no clothes but a chemise, or wretched outer garment; no flannel petticoat, or any thing fit to keep out the pinching cold of winter.’ The want of bedding was still more general. ‘A few flocks, or a little straw, spread in the corner of the room or cellar,’ were all that some poor creatures possessed, with ‘no covering but a single sheet or rug. Many had to lie together, to the number of six, seven, eight, and more, of both sexes, indiscriminately huddled together in their clothes, covered by an old sack or rug.’ As for the food of these miserable beings, it commonly consisted of a little oatmeal, or a few potatoes, or perhaps a little bread. ‘Families,’ said a provision-dealer, ‘that used to buy flour, now purchase only oatmeal; they come for one or two pounds of oatmeal a day, and live upon it.’ A furniture-broker, who was also examined by the commissioners, said, ‘People now bring articles of such a mean description, as they would never have thought of bringing for sale before. They offer me knives and forks, bits of old iron, any thing which they have about them, and they tell me they want to raise money to buy a few potatoes with, just to carry them on another week.’

“Of 15,823 individuals inhabiting 2965 houses, lately visited under the direction of a committee appointed for the purpose, 1204 only are found to be fully employed, 2866 partially employed, and 4148 able to work *were wholly without employment*. The remaining 7605 persons were unable to work. The average weekly income of the above 15,823 persons was 1s. 4½d. each. The average weekly wages of those fully employed were 7s. 6½d. each. The average weekly wages of those partially employed, 4s. 7½d. each.’” — Thornton *on Over-Population*, pp. 33–37.

The particulars which we have given respecting the condition of the laboring classes in England are few and meagre; but they are enough to confirm the following remark by Mr. Thornton:—“Little more than one generation has been required to make Ireland what she is; and as short a period might probably, in similar circumstances, suffice to convert England into an Ireland of human misery and degradation.”

Very grave questions are suggested by the picture of the social condition of Great Britain and Ireland which we have here endeavoured to exhibit. We are tempted to ask, if these are the reputed blessings of the institution of property, that vast and complex machine, so carefully constructed and guarded, the boast of free and civilized man, to which he is accustomed to attribute much of the superiority that he en-

joys over the savage and the slave. Does the institution *necessarily* tend to produce this fearful inequality in the condition of the several classes in society, so that millions of human beings, without any fault of their own, must suffer the accumulated ills of ignorance, extreme destitution, and almost inevitable immorality, while a few thousands of their brethren, distinguished from them only by the accident of birth, monopolize all the comforts and luxuries which learning and wealth can command? Is man able to avoid the responsibility for this fearful state of things by casting the burden of it upon Providence, and saying that these evils are necessary adjuncts of the social state, and must be endured like the "plagues and earthquakes," which "break not Heaven's design," and to which the Christian submits with uncomplaining trust? Or are they rather the consequence of vicious institutions and mistaken legislation, for which man is alone accountable, and which may be remedied without pulling down the whole fabric of society and undoing all the work of modern civilization?

We may hopefully answer this last question in the affirmative, if it can be shown that in the order of Providence there is a natural check or limitation to the excessive accumulation of property in the hands of a few, and to the consequent debasement and misery of the multitude; and that this natural corrective, when not interfered with or rendered powerless by unwise laws or a bad government, does tend so rapidly and effectually towards an equalization of wealth in the community, that no considerable number of persons can possibly be brought to extreme destitution, — certainly, cannot be exposed to the danger of perishing by hunger, except by their own obvious fault. Such a check, we maintain, does exist in, the very circumstance or cause to which the English school of political economists are fond of attributing the whole evil, the whole distress of the laboring classes; we refer to *the natural multiplication of the human species*. Property in the hands of an individual unquestionably tends to accumulate; one who has both money and industry can make greater gains, other things being equal, than his competitor who is obliged to depend on his industry alone. But, from the shortness of human life, an individual can hold this property only for a brief period of years; when he dies, it descends to his offspring, and by the law of nature, as they are all equally

near to him, it is equally divided among them. When this law is not abrogated by human legislation, it causes so frequent a distribution of estates as effectually to overcome the tendency of capital to accumulate, or to continue in a single line of heirs. No sooner is wealth heaped up than it is parcelled out again, and a constant movement or circulation is thus maintained, which sends the life-blood of capital into every part of the body politic. This distribution tends as powerfully to political as to social equality, as the former, indeed, depends upon and is regulated by the latter ; hence it is the safeguard of republics, and the bane of aristocratic governments. The faster the population increases, the more rapidly does this great corrective of the accumulation of property operate ; the greater the number of heirs, the more minute is the division of the parent's wealth.

But this distribution of estates is hostile to the whole spirit of the institutions of Great Britain, which is essentially aristocratic ; and English law therefore seeks to obviate it by two remarkable and unnatural provisions, — the right of primogeniture and the law of entail. By the former, at the death of the parent intestate the real property descends wholly to the eldest son, to the exclusion of the daughters and younger sons ; by the latter, a landholder may “ tie up ” his estate, as the phrase goes, for successive generations, so that a future possessor of it cannot alienate it, but must transmit it unimpaired to the person standing next to him in the line of heirs. Strictly speaking, indeed, as Alison remarks, “ the English law does not recognize entails ; yet they are practically established by the tendency of public feeling, and the succession of family settlements, by which great estates are effectually secured from alienation.” The spirit of these two remarkable provisions is further manifested in a multitude of lesser enactments, all tending to the same end, the keeping up of great estates, and the removal, as far as possible, of all chances of alienation ; to specify them all would require an analysis of the whole common law respecting real property. They are all relics of the feudal system, and the establishment of most of them in England may be traced back to the time of the Norman conquest. A modern contrivance for the same purpose is the imposition of excessive taxes on the transfer of landed estates, the stamp duty on the conveyance of small parcels of land being great out of all proportion to the value of the property conveyed.

Although these regulations directly affect real property alone, it must not be supposed that they are without influence in checking the distribution of personal effects. The aristocratic spirit is perpetuated by them, and diffused throughout the community. To keep up the family by holding the property together, or in a mass, has come to be considered almost as a matter of duty, no less than an object of ambition. The right of the eldest son to the whole real estate creates or sanctions an artificial and unreasonable distinction between him and his brothers and sisters ; and when there is no such estate to be distributed, it gives him a seeming claim for a larger share, if not the whole, of the personal property ; the law which expressly enjoins an inequality in the one case permits and virtually encourages it in the other. Of course, frequent partitions are made on more equitable principles ; our only point is, that they are much less frequent in England than in other countries, where the law favors in every case the equal division of an estate among the children.

Such a country is France, where the law regulating the descent of property is even more democratic than in the United States. It prevents a man from disposing of his wealth as he sees fit, even by will ; the right of each child to a certain portion is protected by law, only a small fraction of the original estate being left to the free disposal of its first owner. And the consequence is, though this law of succession has not yet been in force for half a century, that the class of landed proprietors in France is more numerous than that which subsists altogether on wages, while in England it is but one sixtieth part of their number. In the former country, the number of separate properties taxed for the *impôt foncier*, in 1838, had risen to 10,896,000. The average size of each property was only about fourteen acres ; the number of land-owners, including their wives and children, is estimated at two thirds of the total population of the country. The peasants are proprietors of the ground they cultivate ; and though the land owned by an individual often does not exceed a kitchen garden in size, and is tilled entirely by the spade, its gross product, under his patient and economical husbandry, much exceeds that of a corresponding extent of surface in one of the model monster farms of England. Three and a half millions of peasants cultivate English ground not a foot of which belongs to them, and depend entirely on wages

which, in the best years, hardly supply them with the necessities of life, and which leave them, if the crop fails, or the price of provisions rises, in imminent peril of starvation. The total annual value of the lands which they till on these hard terms is known to exceed forty millions sterling ; and this immense income is monopolized by a few hundreds of the nobility and country gentry, — monopolized by means of legislation which opposes the order of Providence, and perverts the natural course of domestic affection, by rendering division or alienation of it almost impossible.

The princely domains of the Dukes of Sutherland and Buccleuch comprise whole counties respectively in the north and south of Scotland ; and the latter had the power and the audacity, a few years ago, to say to thousands of families belonging to the Free or Seceding Scottish Kirk, the most numerous denomination in the land, that they should not have a church in which to worship God according to their consciences, though they were able to build and pay for it ; the whole country, for leagues around, was his, and he would not give, lease, or sell a foot of it at any price, if it was to be used for the erection of a house of worship. The people submitted, — for *had he not a right to do as he pleased with his own ?* — and the congregations assembled, Sabbath after Sabbath, in the open air, in the public highway, — which, happily, is not owned altogether by the Duke of Buccleuch. A nation submits to social oppression, to the tyranny of wealth, much more quietly than to political oppression ; if Parliament had prohibited an equally large portion of the people from building a single house of worship for their God, the act would have excited a civil war.

The gigantic estates of many of the English nobility, such as the Dukes of Northumberland and Devonshire, the Marquess of Westminster, the Earls of Harrowby, Leicester, and Fitzwilliam, though they may not cover several counties, afford incomes which exceed those of many crowned heads in Europe ; these nobles *own* more rich land in the heart of England than some independent princes *govern* in Germany. And their vast possessions, as a general rule, go on augmenting every generation, either from the union of estates by marriage, or from the annexation by purchase of smaller properties in their vicinity ; their growth is easy ; their partition or alienation is rendered by law almost impracticable. Ireland

itself, wretched, starving Ireland, is owned, as it were, in counties, by the English and Irish nobility and gentry ; it is carved out into monster estates, which are leased piecemeal to middlemen and great farmers, who again subdivide and underlet the land which they hire, till the division is brought down to the little *conacre* patches of the miserable peasants. Many a princely income is made up from an immense aggregation of rents not exceeding 5*l.* or 10*l.* each, and is thus wrung by driblets from the unhappy tenants, who live on "lumper" potatoes and "pressagh," that they may be able to pay it. Throughout Great Britain and Ireland, the word *farmer* denotes one who hires the ground which he cultivates, while in the United States it signifies almost without exception the proprietor of the soil. In France and Switzerland, also, he who tills the land is the owner of it, and, small though his property be, its product is sufficient for his wants. Contrasting the general well-being of the farming population in these three countries with the misery of the English and Irish peasantry, and remembering also that Great Britain is vastly more opulent than either of the others, we cannot avoid attributing the whole evil to that great inequality in the distribution of her wealth, and that monopoly of her soil by a few families, which have been designedly created and fostered by the aristocratic spirit of her institutions and laws.

The English school of political economy, the school of the Edinburgh Review, of Malthus and Ricardo, of McCulloch and Dr. Chalmers, will not admit that this aggregation of land and all other property in the hands of a few is any evil at all. Looking only to the *production* of wealth, and affecting to consider its *distribution* as wholly unimportant, — a matter which will regulate itself, — they stoutly maintain that the division of land and capital is an evil ; that neither of these agents can produce its utmost beneficial effects unless accumulated in large masses ; that great improvements in agriculture cannot be made except on immense farms by the aid of opulent landholders ; that the benefit which the community receives from the operations of husbandry consists only in the *net* product, and not in the *gross* amount of food added to the national stock ; that the individual producer, the farmer or land-owner, is the best judge of his own interest, and what conduces most to his profits is sure to be most advantageous to the nation. Now, human labor is an item, and a very im-

portant one, in the cost of raising a crop ; — economize labor, then ; substitute machines for human beings ; lower the rate of wages ; make every article as cheap as possible ; don't impede the operations of your great capitalists and land-owners, and "leave things to take care of themselves." *Laissez faire.* True, a smaller amount of food will be produced, a less number of appetites will be satisfied, and a greater crowd of laborers thrown out of employment. But the expense of the year's operations is diminished in an equal, or even larger, proportion ; the farmer's *net* gain is greater, and he is able to pay a higher rent to his princely landlord, who is in great need of an addition to his annual income, which may not *yet* equal a hundred thousand pounds sterling, though two or three of the English nobility count twice that sum.

And this is the theory which English economists have been advocating for half a century, and which all the great capitalists, land-owners, and farmers have been vigorously reducing to practice ! Labor has been economized with a vengeance, and we have seen the results in the picture already presented of the social condition of Great Britain. Wages have been reduced to the lowest point at which the laborers can buy bread and potatoes enough for a scanty subsistence, the surplus rural population has been drained off into the great cities or the workhouses, and twelve hundred thousand paupers have been thrown upon the public, without counting at least an equal number who are dependent in great part on private charity. Only 760,000 families in England are now employed on the tillage of her 25,632,000 acres of cultivated ground, which is an average of one family to 34 acres ; that is, a square mile gives employment to about 19 families. In portions of Tuscany, says M. Sismondi, from 300 to 700 individuals cultivate a square mile, and earn from it a comfortable subsistence ; they are proverbially the happiest peasantry in Europe, excepting perhaps the Swiss, who have a still denser population, at least an equal proportion of them engaged in agriculture, and a far more minute division of land. 'Very unthrifty husbandry this,' McCulloch and Chalmers would probably exclaim ; 'the net income of a great proprietor in Tuscany must be quite small ; with the aid of agricultural machines and the improved modes of English husbandry, three fourths of this laboring population would be dispensed with ; and the net gain — the addition to the

national capital — would be much greater.' Very true ; but the laborers thus *dispensed with* would starve, and though the national capital might be increased, what would be the effect on the national *happiness* ?

Those who have not studied the subject will be astonished to find to what extent this policy of favoring the increase of great landed estates, of consolidating farms, and driving off the laborers and small tenants, has been carried in every part of Great Britain and Ireland. For political reasons, of late, great proprietors have become very shy of letting their lands on long leases, or, indeed, on any leases at all ; small farmers, who were sure of their little holdings for a number of years to come, were sometimes found to disregard the wishes of their landlords at an election ; tenants at will were usually more compliant. The Irish people being factious and obstinate in the matter of politics, their landlords have very generally adopted this mode of "breaking them in," and perhaps the greater portion of their farm lands are now rented without leases. Of course, this policy was ruinous for both parties, the tenants not daring to make any improvements on the ground, being in constant danger of ejection, and exposed to fresh extortion every year in the way of rent. Accordingly, when the economists had made this great discovery of the gain to be derived from the union of farms and the banishment of the tenantry, the Irish landlords had the power all in their own hands for reducing the theory immediately to practice. How they exercised it can be fully known only by an intrepid examination of the five great folios, to which we have already alluded, containing the Report of the Commissioners on the Occupation of Land in Ireland. We can give but one specimen. Lord Kenmare is the landlord, the barony of Bantry is the scene, and the Rev. Christopher Freeman, the Roman Catholic curate of the parish, is the witness ; his testimony, we should observe, is fully confirmed by eight other deponents, several of whom were banished tenants themselves, and is substantially corroborated by his Lordship's own agent, who was put upon the stand for the express purpose of confuting or explaining away their statements. Mr. Freeman says : —

"Up to the year 1840, the consolidation of farms, and the consequent wholesale eviction of tenants, was almost unknown in this barony. Lord Kenmare commenced in the year 1840 by

ejecting from the lands of Ahills 22 families, comprising 135 individuals. He ejected, in the years 1842 and 1843, 16 families, comprising 97 individuals. Total evicted from the Kenmare property 38 families, comprising 232 individuals. I am vastly under the mark ; I might say a good deal more. The persons evicted paid their rent regularly ; the rents amounted from 5*l.* 10*s.* to 20*l.* each, and some of them more. They were, with very few exceptions, extremely honest, well-disposed, and industrious persons ; and the object to be obtained by the consolidation of these farms, and depriving these unfortunate people of their only means of subsistence, I cannot tell."

"What in general has become of them ?" — "The children of some of them have been begging ; some of them have died in the most dreadful distress ; some of them I know to be comfortable ; and some of them have had typhus fever. I attended one family of eleven immediately after being ejected. They were ill with fever, and the father was obliged to get out of bed to attend to them, and he was in the fever himself ; and I was obliged to remove one out of bed in order to hear the confession of another, — and I believe that to be solely caused by Lord Kenmare's dispossessing the people.

"Was any thing done by Lord Kenmare or his agent to assist these people ?" — "Nothing whatever. I went myself to Lord Kenmare, and wrote to him the following letter : —

"MY LORD, — When the cause of the distressed or afflicted is to be advocated, I feel that it would be superfluous to make an apology for trespassing on your Lordship's time. You are, I suppose, my Lord, aware, that many honest, industrious persons have been ejected from your estate in the parish of Bantry. It is to plead the cause of these unfortunate but honest people, and to enlist, if possible, your Lordship's sympathy in their behalf, that I have come to Killarney. May I request, my Lord, the favor of an interview at your Lordship's earliest convenience ?

"I have the honor to be, &c."

"And this is the answer I got from his Lordship, which shows he was conversant of it : —

"SIR, — In reply to your communication, I beg to say, that giving you credit for good intentions, I must yet decline granting you the interview you desire, as I cannot allow any person to interfere with me in the management of my property. I am, Sir, &c.

KENMARE."

"The means by which the consolidation was, and is about to be, accomplished, I am well acquainted with. In the great majority of cases, no law process was required. The population to

be evicted were told, that if they gave possession peaceably, and left Lord Kenmare's property, they would get their potato gardens, and a certain portion of their other crops then growing on their farms. They were then told, that if they did not comply with these terms, law proceedings would be commenced, and they were then to expect nothing but the heaviest vengeance of Lord Kenmare and his agent. It is very well ascertained that it is equal to death to the poor people to be deprived of their lands; some of them die miserably. The consequences are indeed melancholy, both as regards the persons ejected, and many of those who took the large farms at *rack* rents. At present, there are a great number in a state of uncertainty, and they must give up ultimately. They do not manure the land, because, they say, if they improved it, it would be doing so for other persons."

The whole estate of the Earl of Kenmare in this barony consists of 23,000 acres, on which is a population of 3,400 persons; and the process of ejection and consolidation seems to be still going on. His Lordship has succeeded in his main purpose in making these *improvements*, as the testimony shows, that, in one case, lands which had been let under him by a middleman for 86*l.* 6*s.* 2*d.* are now let by the Earl himself for 410*l.* Similar changes have been effected, or are even now taking place, all over Ireland; we could fill a large volume with a record of cases quite like the one here described.

Let us now turn to Scotland, and look more particularly at the forced depopulation, to which we have already alluded, of the Highland districts and the Islands. For an account of the most remarkable case we are indebted to the *Études sur l'Économie Politique* of M. Sismondi, — English political economists and other writers, for obvious reasons, being very chary of allusions to the subject; even Alison and Thornton, who deplore the issue of the experiment, as having occasioned a frightful increase of suffering and pauperism, do not enter into any particulars, and make no comment on the proceedings and motives of the chief agents in the business. But one who is not a British subject may be allowed to speak freely of the conduct even of the great Duchess of Sutherland, and her noble and wealthy fellow-proprietors and imitators. We have never met with the Account of the Improvements made on the Estates of the Marquess of Stafford, by James Loch, Esq., the agent of the Duchess in this

business, who wrote and published his book as a justification of her proceedings ; but Sismondi's account of it appears to be temperate and trustworthy. The statement which follows is a mere translation and abridgment of this French writer's clear and eloquent review of the whole matter.

Since the beginning of the present century, the nation of the Highlanders or Gauls, the descendants of the ancient Celts, now reduced to 340,000 souls, has been almost entirely expelled from its home by the very persons whom it regarded as its chieftains, and to whom it had shown for so many centuries an enthusiastic devotion. The territory which they had cultivated from generation to generation, under a fixed rent, has been taken from them and devoted to the pasturage of flocks guarded by herdsmen who were strangers ; their houses and villages have been razed to the ground or destroyed by fire, while the unhappy people have been forced either to build cabins on the sea-shore, and endeavour to maintain their miserable existence by fishing, or to cross the ocean to seek their fortune in the back settlements of America. As this revolution took place in a distant and almost barbarous region, of which the very language was unknown in other parts of the empire, it attracted at first but little attention. But when it became known in England that some of these people had waited till a military force arrived to expel them from their villages, and sometimes had driven away the soldiers by a shower of stones ; that they had been heard to intreat that they might be massacred with their wives and children on the graves of their fathers, rather than be sent away, to perish, in misery and abandonment, to a world which wished not to receive them, and where no place was reserved for them, universal sympathy was excited. It was reported that the agent had been compelled to set fire to their houses, and even that an old man, or, according to other accounts, an old woman, refusing to leave her cabin to encounter misery and exile, her presence did not stop the incendiary, and the victim had perished in the flames. Then the public indignation showed itself, in a manner which could be neither mistaken nor braved. The Duchess of Sutherland thought she did not merit the severe judgment which was passed upon her conduct, and it was to justify her at the bar of public opinion that the book of her agent was published. He has tried to prove, and he has done it successfully, that

the Duchess has exercised only her acknowledged legal rights, and in so doing has had regard to the preservation of the existence of her vassals, for which she felt that she was responsible.

The ancestors of this lady were proprietors of about three fourths of the county of Sutherland, in the most northern part of Scotland. Their possessions measured about one million of English acres. When the Countess of Sutherland inherited these domains, which she brought as a dowry to the Marquess of Stafford, since created Duke of Sutherland, their population did not exceed 15,000. The revenue obtained by the proprietor from her vassals was so small, that it might be considered rather as an acknowledgment of sovereignty, than as a rent. It appears, that as late as 1811, each family was bound to an annual payment only of a few shillings in money, of some articles of game, and of a few days' labor. On the other hand, every man born upon these domains was required to spare neither his blood nor his life in defending the sovereignty and honor of the family of which he considered himself as a member. *Mhoir-Fhear Chaitaibh*, as he was called in Gaelic, or *The Great Man of Sutherland*, had always found his companions in arms ready to defend him, at the peril of their lives, against every enemy, whether foreign or domestic.

The population was pretty equally distributed over the whole district. Every valley had its hamlet; the arable land was devoted to the cultivation of barley and oats, and the hills were given to the pasturage of cattle. The people were poor, as labor and pasturage were their chief resources; the climate was severe, the winters long, and they had neither manufactures, commerce, nor money. But they had generally enough to supply their wants; and even when the wrath of Heaven sometimes destroyed their harvests, and decimated them and their herds by famine, they knew how to submit with resignation, because the hand of man had had no part in their sufferings.

Between the years 1811 and 1820, these 15,000 inhabitants, forming about 3,000 families, were driven away, or, to use Mr. Loch's softened expression, *removed*, from the whole interior of the county. All their villages were demolished or burnt, and all their fields converted into pasture. A similar clearing was made, almost simultaneously, by the

owners of the rest of the county, and their example was soon followed by the great proprietors in Ross and Cromarty counties, and generally throughout the north of Scotland. Mr. Loch assures us that the Duchess of Sutherland has shown far more humanity than any of her neighbours ; she has interested herself in the fate of the exiles, has offered them a retreat on her own territory, and, on taking away from them 794,000 acres, of which they had been in possession from time immemorial, she has generously left them about 6,000, or two acres to a family. The land thus granted to them, however, had never been cultivated, and had yielded no income to the proprietor. Still, it was not conceded to them gratuitously ; they are subject to a moderate rent of two and a half shillings an acre, and no leases are granted to them for more than seven years ; but they are assured that the leases shall be renewed for another term of seven years, if the land should be well cultivated. Mr. Loch informs us that the fate of these exiles has not been so deplorable as they foreboded. Some, it is true, were unwilling to receive any thing from her who had driven them from their homes. The clan Gunn, or the MacHamish, after leaving the mountains of Kildonan, and the valleys of Naver, and Helmsdale, quitted the country entirely, and we are not told what has become of them. But with the exception of this tribe, and of 32 families from Strathbrora, who left for America in 1818 and 1819, the clansmen, we are told, have *almost* all accepted the lots offered them by the Duchess. They have been aided by her in building their new habitations, and in attempting to cultivate the ground which had hitherto remained a waste.

The territory of which the Duchess has thus reclaimed possession has been divided by her agent, Mr. Loch, into 29 great farms, very unequal in extent, some of them being larger than the department of the Seine in France. These farms, intended solely for the pasturage of sheep, are each inhabited by a single family, and as the kind of labor required upon them is a new thing in Scotland, only English farm-servants are employed. As early as 1820, the place of the brave men who formerly shed their blood in defence of Mhoir-Fhear Chattaibh was filled by 131,000 sheep, and their number is now doubtless much increased. No human voice is now heard within the narrow passes of those hills once

made illustrious by the combats of an ancient race ; no one any longer calls to mind their glorious recollections ; the valleys have no more any hamlets, no accent of joy or grief any longer troubles those vast solitudes ; but the heir of the Earl of Sutherland, who is established for the future in England, many hundreds of miles distant from the country of his maternal ancestors, can repose and enjoy himself for his ancient vassals ; in his magnificent abode at Trentham he can display a royal pomp, and encourage by his luxury the manufactures of England.

There is no doubt that the experiment has been successful ; this revolution in the property, the habits, the affections, the whole existence, of a little nation has prodigiously augmented the already colossal fortune of the Duke of Sutherland. This expulsion of the Gaelic people from their ancient firesides is considered as legal ; but will men dare to say that it is just ? Other great proprietors in the county have not been so humane even as the Duchess. “ The clan of the Gruids on Lochshin,” says Mr. Loch, “ was numerous ; it does not appear that any lot of land was assigned to this people, or that they have received any recompense since the time of their expulsion, which took place in the winter of 1818.” This ancient nation of the Celts or Gauls, which formerly possessed not only the British isles, but France, and a part of Italy and Spain, shall it be driven, in the name of the laws, from those very rocks where it was never conquered, from those rocks where it maintained its independence, that was lost everywhere else ? Ought these last representatives of the most ancient masters of Europe to be exiled ?

It is by a cruel abuse of legal forms, by a flagrant usurpation, that the Highlanders either of Sutherland county or of other parts of Scotland have been considered as having no right to the soil which they have occupied for centuries, and of which, in fact, they were co-proprietors with their chieftains. Even their name, *Klaan*, in Gaelic signifies *children*. All their usages, all their reciprocal relations, all their affections, were founded on the tradition that they were the offspring of one family ; all their rights were those of the children of a common parent to the common patrimony. The chieftain exercised, perhaps he usurped, the right of dividing the land among them, and even of frequently altering this

distribution. It was a matter of public policy with the Celts, as well as with the Germans, that families should frequently, even annually, change their position in the district which belonged to them, lest they should become too much attached to the fields which they cultivated, and thus be unfitted for war, and averse to undertaking military expeditions. But though their locations were altered, the vacated places were occupied by other members of the same clan, and the chieftain could not alienate any portion of the common property. The tenure of the lands remained the same ; the assessment for the public defence, the annual contribution for the chieftain who ruled them and led them to battle, were never augmented.

The vast extent of seignorial domains is not a condition peculiar to England. In the ninth and tenth centuries, Maine, Anjou, and Poitou were, for the counts of these provinces, three great farms rather than three principalities. Switzerland, which in so many respects resembles Scotland, was at the same epoch divided among a small number of great lords. If the counts of Kyburg, Lentzburg, and Hapsburg had been protected by English laws, they would now be situated just as the counts of Sutherland were thirty years ago ; perhaps they might have had the same taste for improvements, and have depopulated their lands to give place to flocks and herds. But during the last eight centuries, the legislation of Continental Europe has constantly tended to guaranty and ameliorate the lot of the feudatory, the vassal, the serf, — to confirm the independence of the peasant, to cover him with the buckler of prescription, to shield him from the exactions of his lord, and to elevate his allotment to the rank of property. But English law has always favored the great lords ; English jurists have constantly assimilated political rights to property, and have defended them under this title. The Gaelic tenant was never conquered ; he did not obtain his land from the liberality of his lord, but was originally a fellow-proprietor with him, or rather with his clan. The chief whom he followed to battle regarded him at first as his friend and relation, then as his soldier, afterwards as his vassal, still later as his farmer, and finally as his hired laborer, whom he might employ for a time, but might banish from the estate when he had no further need of his services.

The first step in the usurpation was to grant the *tacks*, or portions of land, to the vassals for a fixed period of time. This appeared to be a concession, as formerly the occupants could be changed at will ; but in truth it was a usurpation, for now, instead of filling the vacated places with other clansmen on precisely the same conditions, the lands came to be considered as farms, and at each renewal of the lease new terms might be imposed, and a higher rent demanded. Thus the Highland lords, who were rightfully entitled only to an invariable rent levied on the property of the clan, obtained at last an absolute ownership of the domain which paid this rent. Still, they were far from believing that the time would come when they would take advantage of the renewal of the leases, not merely to raise the rent, but to expel their vassals from the estate. Before coming to a determination so barbarous, the chieftain must have ceased to share the opinions, the sentiments, the point of honor of his countrymen ; he must have ceased to regard himself as their father or their brother, or even to remember that he was himself a Scotchman ; a base cupidity must have stifled in him that sympathy of kindred blood on which their common ancestors relied when they confided to him the fate of his people.

A count has no more right to banish from their homes the inhabitants of his county, than a king has to expel from the land the inhabitants of his kingdom. Let the most despotic monarch make the trial, and he will soon learn the hazard of thus overleaping the bounds of his authority. Let the great English lords beware ! The less numerous they are, the more dangerous will it be for them to put themselves in opposition to the nation. Let them not say, when their own interests are at stake, as the agent of the Duchess of Sutherland has said : — “ Why should a different rule be adopted in this case from that which has been followed in every other ? Why should the absolute right of owners to their property be abandoned or sacrificed for the public advantage, and for motives which concern the public alone ? ” If they should come one day to believe that they have no need of the people, the people will begin to believe in its turn that it has no need of them. If they think that 340,000 brave mountaineers of the Gaelic race can be profitably driven off to make room for four million sheep, these mountaineers can still more easily find useful substitutes for thirty or forty,

perhaps for three hundred, great lords who have ceased to be their countrymen.

We have chosen to give this whole account of the depopulation of the Highlands in M. Sismondi's own eloquent words, though necessarily with much abridgment and transposition, because we have not the book at hand from which he obtained the particulars, and because we would not be suspected of exaggeration or national prejudice in exposing the barbarity and flagrant injustice of the proceeding. The whole history shows in a striking light the tendency of English law to favor the growth and permanency of great landed estates, and the natural result of those measures which have been so strenuously advocated by the English economists, — the *Chrematistic* or Capitalist school, as Sismondi calls them, — who defend the aggregation of land and capital into a few hands, and leave the interests of the laboring classes of the population to take care of themselves. The introduction of the system of monster farms, and the expulsion of the rural tenantry, have been going on more slowly and quietly in England than in the two sister kingdoms, but quite as extensively, and attended with perfectly similar results. The consequence is an enormous increase of pauperism, a reduction of wages almost to the point of starvation, an overflow of the whole empire with laborers out of employment, a famine during the present year, when there was no absolute lack of food, and, in short, all the terrible signs and proofs of national decay and distress. The whole evil may be described in the few words in which the philosophical Roman pointed out the cause of the ruin of Italy; *latifundia perdidere* — *Britanniam*.

Finding that the support of the laboring classes was a burden not to be avoided, — that if employment and wages were not given to them, they must be maintained as paupers, — that if they were driven from the country, they would take refuge in the cities and manufacturing districts, where the very air would be polluted by their misery and their crimes, the capitalists and land-owners, guided by the political economists, have at last discovered that the evil consists solely in a redundancy of population, and that the only remedies are emigration and the discouragement of marriages. The doctrine of Malthus is the last refuge of the *Chrematistic* school; the New Poor Law, the conversion of almshouses into places of

punishment, the separation of the sexes in them, and the change of public charity into a system of graduated starvation, are the results of an attempt to reduce this doctrine to practice. Population, say the Malthusians, has an inherent tendency, in all cases, to outrun the means of subsistence; it tends constantly to increase in a *geometrical progression*, doubling every twenty-five or thirty years, while the supply of food, at the best, cannot be increased faster than in an *arithmetical ratio*, equal quantities being added every twenty-five years. Put these two principles together, and it follows by mathematical demonstration that the whole world must soon be brought to the verge of actual starvation. Why the human race has so long remained far on this side of the awful precipice, why we have not, on their theory, been starved out long ago, or have not been reduced, like a wrecked crew on a raft in the midst of the ocean, to fight with each other for the last loaf, is a mystery which they do not condescend to explain. As the powers of a geometrical so far exceed those of an arithmetical ratio, the world ought to have been overpeopled some thousands of years ago. But it is not; Providence has not yet sent any human beings into the world when there was no place at the table for them.

Even in the extreme case of Ireland, we have shown that the extent and fruitfulness of the soil would suffice for a population thrice as large as the present one; and the misery of the people there was nearly as excessive half a century ago as it is now, though the population then was but half as large. There is no surplus of population, but there is a frightful surplus of labor which can find no employment, and consequently cannot be exchanged for the food which exists all around in abundance. A child can see that the famine of the present year was not caused by the lack either of food or of wealth; if the national stock of both could be equally distributed, not one of Queen Victoria's subjects would suffer a single pang from hunger. It is palpable that the evil does not consist in over-population, but in unequal distribution. But you say, that it is difficult to bring about a more equal division without infringing the rights of property. Granted, for the sake of argument; but do not confound *this* difficulty with another of quite an opposite character,—the difficulty of feeding a great multitude out of five small loaves and two fishes. There are now loaves and fishes enough for all; but

they are all in the hands of very few persons, who claim them as their own, and the problem is, how to get them out of these few hands, and to give them to the starving people. Before you declare this problem to be insoluble, abolish your laws of primogeniture and entail, adopt the French law of succession, break up your monster farms into cottage allotments, substitute spade husbandry for agricultural machines, and *educate the people*. If you leave them in the condition of brutes, depend upon it that they will multiply like brutes.

Of all the doctrines of the English political economists, that of Malthus is at once the most absurd and the most pernicious. It is a futile attempt to throw off the burden of responsibility for that state of things which is plainly attributable to nothing but human selfishness and improvidence, — to consider as irremediable, and inherent in the very constitution of man, those evils which flow directly from a vicious form of social and political organization, and from unjust and unnatural laws. Its only monition is, *to let things alone*; to allow privation, wretchedness, and crime to produce their appropriate results; to abstain from aggravating the evil by any interposition of public or private charity between the stern decrees of an overruling necessity and its destined victims. It seeks to deprive the poor of the only solace which remains to them, — the indulgence, within the limits of morality and law, of the natural appetites and affections; it holds up “abstinence from marriage for prudential motives” as the only panacea for their wretchedness, though it acknowledges that this implies a degree of forethought and self-restraint which is not to be expected from them in their miserable and degraded condition. But all other expedients for alleviating their sufferings it pronounces to be futile and self-destructive. Luckily, it is unsound in theory, and is abundantly confuted by facts.

Malthus begins with the assumption, that there is no check to the multiplication of the species except from the want of food. According to his doctrine, those classes of the population ought to increase most rapidly which are most abundantly supplied with the means of subsistence; while the growth of the destitute classes should be perpetually checked by their poverty. Now the very reverse happens to be the case, and this because the rate of increase actually depends, not on the supply of food, but on sundry moral considera-

tions which he leaves entirely out of view. If every man got married as soon as he was urged by natural inclination, and as soon as he saw there was no fear lest his wife and himself should perish of actual starvation, the world would be peopled very rapidly. But no one propounds to himself the question in this shape ; the candidate for matrimony asks further, if he is likely to improve his condition in life by the measure, or if he is sure at any rate not to lose position and caste by it, not to descend in the social scale, or to forfeit those advantages and enjoyments which habit has caused him to consider as necessities of life. If there is any risk of this sort, you may be sure that prudence or ambition will get the victory over love. Raise the standard of living, increase the number of artificial wants, multiply the chances of advancement in life, and people will become still more cautious about bringing upon themselves the impediment of a family. The middling classes of society increase in number very slowly, the upper classes do not increase at all. Marriages among them are governed entirely by prudential considerations. Who ever heard of kings marrying for love ? Among the English nobility and gentry, families frequently die out, estates are united, and titles become extinct. If the House of Lords were not replenished by continual promotions to the peerage, it would soon become a very meagre assemblage. Younger sons prefer a life of licentious celibacy to the restraints of a family, and to the almost certain loss of caste by getting a wife without an estate. The undowried charms of the daughters are not likely to be besieged by a multitude of suitors. Thus the sole chance of continuing the family often depends on the marriage of the eldest son and heir, and this is quite likely to be deferred till he has passed the period of youthful extravagance, and purchased the discretion which comes only with maturity of years.

On the other hand, the poorer classes, who have no hope of bettering their condition, and cannot fall far because they are already near the bottom, marry with little consideration or foresight. And even this little fails among those who are already steeped in poverty to the lips, who are too ignorant and degraded ever to look beyond the wants and impulses of the present moment, and too wretched to fear any increase of their misery. Mr. Laing states this point strongly.

“ Evidence abounds of the tendency to improvident marriages

among the distressed population of the manufacturing districts generally, and also among such portions of the agricultural population as are most wretched and degraded. In fact, an accelerated rate of increase in the population is a necessary result of poverty down to the point where literal starvation arrests its progress; and how low this point lies, the instance of Ireland sufficiently attests. While lumper-potatoes can be had for food, and a corner of a cellar with a bundle of mouldy straw for lodging, it is a *demonstrated fact* that population will continue to increase at a rate *five times more rapid* than in countries where every peasant lives under his own roof and cultivates his own estate. The reasons are obvious; directly [*sic*] the laborer is placed in a situation where he has nothing to look forward to,—no hope of being able to better his condition by restraint,—no definite period of establishment in life as a master-workman, or independent proprietor, to mark the prudent and customary era of marriage,—all the natural checks on the instinctive appetite are withdrawn, and he marries, as a matter of course, as soon as he feels the inclination. The great check on premature marriage in every class is the ‘public opinion’ of that class, which requires a certain income and establishment in life before marrying, under penalty of losing caste and being looked upon as silly and imprudent. When the standard prescribed by the ‘public opinion’ of the class has sunk so low that, as Mr. Fletcher says of the weaving population of Nuneaton, men commonly marry ‘without a home to go to,’ or ‘with a bed consisting of chaff, held together by bricks, and covered with a wrapper,’ for sole stock of furniture, it is evident that all moral check on population is at an end, and that the evil must of necessity go on propagating itself, until either typhus fever and famine make a clearance, or the moral and physical condition of the people is raised by exertions from without.

“It is *not true*, that if we relieve distress and diminish vice and misery, population rushes in like a spring-tide to efface the puny lines which we have traced in the sand. On the contrary, it is distinctly true, that duty and expediency, the means of raising the condition of the laboring classes, and the means of rightly proportioning their numbers to the supply of food, go hand in hand; and that in applying ourselves zealously to the task imposed upon us by religion and humanity, of relieving immediate distress, and promoting the welfare and improvement of the poorer classes, we are at the same time adopting the only effectual means of limiting the morbid and unhealthy increase of a destitute population.” — *Laing on National Distress*, pp. 68–70.

The Malthusians have simply inverted the order of cause

and effect. They say, that increase of population causes misery ; while the truth is, that misery causes the increase of population. Of course, we must reverse the Malthusian precepts for the management of the poor ; instead of preaching abstinence and moral restraint to them, and endeavouring to starve them into it, — instead of separating the sexes in workhouses, prohibiting out-door relief, discountenancing public and private charity, and declaring that the condition of the destitute classes is hopeless, and that interference with them will only increase their misery, — we must strive to succour and elevate them, to give them a stake in life, to surround them not only with necessities, but with some comforts and luxuries, the fear of losing which will inculcate prudence more strongly, will do more to deter them from forming imprudent marriages, than all the lectures of Dr. Chalmers, or all the stories and illustrations of Miss Martineau. The difficulty of accomplishing all this is unquestionably great, but any thing is better than the despondency of McCulloch, who speaks gloomily of “ the irremediable helotism of the great majority ” of the laboring classes, but, in conformity with the principles of the *Chrematistic* school, of which he is the great expounder and advocate, has no advice to offer except to take away all the remaining restrictions on trade, and then “ to fold our arms, and leave the *dénouement* to time and Providence.” *

That the view here taken of the law of population is the only correct one is shown not only by theoretical considerations, but by the incontrovertible evidence of facts. In France, where the land is minutely divided, and the peasantry are vastly better off than in England, the rate of increase of the population, for ten years, is only 5 *per cent.*, while in the latter country it is 15, and in Connaught, the sink of Irish misery and degradation, from 1821 to 1831, it was as high as 22 *per cent.* In the province of Ulster the rate is 14, while in the county of Donegal it rises to 20 *per cent.*

“ And this is precisely the county which official reports represent as forming an exception to the general condition of Presbyterian Ulster, and affording an instance of poverty little less extreme than that of Connaught. In the latter province, we find

* McCulloch *on Taxation*. London, 1845, pp. 110, 111.

Galway and Mayo, notoriously the two most destitute counties, exhibiting, the one an increase of 27, and the other of 25 *per cent.* In Munster, we find Clare, Kerry, and Tipperary at the head of the list." — Laing *on National Distress*, p. 67.

But enough ; the subject leads on to endless disquisition and illustrations, and we have already much exceeded our limits. We have pointed out the evils in the social condition of England, and some of the causes of them, certainly with no feeling of bitterness, and in no vainglorious spirit, because the condition of our own population is so much happier, and because our political institutions exhibit tendencies the very opposite of those which have imposed this intolerable burden of poverty and wretchedness upon the necks of British subjects. The spectacle is too awful, the prospect is too appalling, to excite any other emotions than those of the deepest sympathy and commiseration. The causes of the evil are deeply seated ; they are inwoven with the very texture of British institutions, and cannot be removed without destroying the whole fabric. The feudalism of wealth, the serfdom of the laboring classes, are so firmly anchored in the empire, that they can be shaken only by the hurricane strength of a revolution like that which prostrated the throne and the nobility of France in 1789. The immediate cause of the wildest excesses of that epoch was a cry of the populace for bread ; and one of the great permanent effects of that memorable convulsion was the adoption of a democratic law regulating the descent of property. England is already heaving with the first throes of a similar outbreak. The frequent suspension of the *Habeas Corpus* act in Ireland, and the disarming of its people, the Chartist disturbances in 1838, and the riots in the midland counties in 1842, are signs the purport of which cannot be mistaken. Even now, peace is maintained only at the point of the bayonet, by the presence of large bodies of troops, and of an armed and disciplined police. These facts are full of warning to the stoutest declaimer for the preservation of noble families, and for the extension of great landed estates. Let the blessings of an hereditary aristocracy be what they may, admit all that is claimed for it by such advocates as Alison and Dr. Chalmers, it is still possible that they may be purchased at too high a price.